REMARKS

Claims 1-22 are all the claims pending in the application, including new claims 19-22.

Claims 1-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hashizume et al. (US 5,592,258). Claim 18 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection as set forth below.

Hashizume et al. relates to a film transporting apparatus and a film processing system. An example of the film transporting apparatus is displayed in FIG. 3, and an example of the film processing system is displayed in FIG. 1. As shown in FIG. 1, a photographic printing system 1 includes a scanner section SC for detecting image information of a film 2, an exposure section EX for projecting/exposing the image information of the film 2 onto a print paper 3, a developing section DE for developing the exposed print paper 3, and a controller CO for controlling the respective sections. The controller CO is connected to a control panel O for inputting a variety of control instructions and a monitor MT for displaying, e.g. the image information read at the scanner section SC. The scanner section SC includes a light source 49, a mirror tunnel 53 for uniformly mixing irradiation light of the light source 49, a scanner-section film transport unit U1 for transporting and positioning the film 2 at this scanner section SC, an image sensor 51 for converting the image information of the film 2 into electric signals, and a scanning lens 52 for imaging the image information of the film 2 on the image sensor 51. The exposure section EX includes an exposure light source 60, a light modulating filter 61 for adjusting color balance of the irradiation light from the exposure light source 60 in association

with color filters of yellow, magenta, cyanogen into and from an exposure optical path, a mirror tunnel 62 for uniformly mixing the light, the color balance of which has been adjusted by the light modulating filter 61, an exposure-section film transport unit U2 for transporting and positioning the film 2 at the exposure section EX, a printing lens 63 for imaging the image information of the film 2 on the print paper 3, a shutter 64, transport rollers 65 and a motor 66 for driving the transport rollers 65.

FIG. 3 shows the exposure-section film transport unit U2, including a lower unit 8 and an upper unit 7. The lower unit 8 includes drive rollers 80a, 80b, 80c, 80d, 80e, a lower guide 81 for supporting and guiding right and left ends of the film 2 and defining a recess at a portion thereof where an image-bearing face of the film 2 is to pass through, a motor 83a for driving the drive roller 80a via a belt 82a, a further motor 83b for driving the rollers 80b, 80c, 80d, 80e via a further belt 82b, a pivot guide 84 which forms a part of a film loop forming mechanism R, a light emitting portion 85a of a DX code detecting optical sensor 85 for detecting a DX code of the film 2, a light emitting portion 86a of a perforation detecting optical sensor 86 for detecting perforations of the film 2, a light emitting portion 87a of an image detecting optical sensor 87 for detecting the image-bearing area of the film 2, and a negative mask 88 having an opening 88a for regulating an area to be printed on the print paper 3 of the image-bearing area of the film 2.

Applicants herein rewrite claim 2 in independent form including the limitations of claim 1. Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. do not teach or suggest having a mask opening that is a mask slit extending in a width direction of said photo film, as required by claim 2. The Examiner cites mask opening 31a of FIG. 18 as allegedly corresponding to this feature of claim 2. However, as shown in FIGS. 20a and 20b, the opening 31a extends in a length direction of the

film 2. Furthermore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not consider the opening 31a to be a "mask slit." On the contrary, the opening 31a is too wide to be considered a slit. Therefore, Applicants submit that claim 2 is not anticipated by the prior art.

Also, claims 3-18 are allowable over the prior art, at least because of their dependence from claim 2.

With further regard to claim 4, Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. do not teach or suggest that the image is read by the image sensor line by line while a feed roller conveys the photo film. On the contrary, the reference simply states that the image sensor 51 reads the image information, with no discussion of whether or not the image is read line by line. Since alternative sensors, such as an area sensor, can also obtain image information, the sensor 51 of Hashizume et al. need not include features of claim 4. Such ambiguity should not be construed against the Applicants. Thus, claim 4 is allowable for this additional reason.

Regarding claim 5, Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. do not teach or suggest the claimed protrusion portion disposed on the mask member to extend in the width direction of the photo film, provided with the mask slit formed in a middle thereof, for flexing the photo film in the longitudinal direction to remove flexing in the width direction. In the Office Action (page 3), the Examiner does not refer to any particular portion of the apparatus of Hashizume et al. as allegedly disclosing the claimed protrusion portion. Instead, the Examiner only mentions the mask member 31, mask opening 31a, and the photo film. Not only does the reference fail to disclose the protrusion portion, but also the reference fails to teach or suggest flexing the photo film in the longitudinal direction to remove flexing in the width direction. In fact, the Examiner

has not pointed to any portion of the reference as allegedly disclosing the claimed flexing feature. Moreover, since the apparatus of Hashizume et al. lacks the claimed protrusion portion, it follows that the flexing feature related to the protrusion portion must also be missing from Hashizume et al. Hence, claim 5 is allowable over the prior art for this additional reason.

With respect to claim 8, Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. fail to teach or suggest that the protrusion portion comprises a cylindrical ridge. Here, the Examiner seems to assert that the press roller 89a-89e corresponds to the claimed protrusion portion, but Applicants disagree. The Examiner cites col. 15, lines 25-26 in this regard, but the excerpt states that the film 2 is pinched by the drive rollers 80a-80e and the pressing rollers 89a-89e. Such a disclosure fails to correspond to the claimed feature of the protrusion portion comprising a cylindrical ridge. First, the pressing rollers 89a-89e are not disposed on the mask 88. See FIG. 3. Second, the pressing rollers are not taught or suggested as being for flexing the film 2 in a longitudinal direction to remove flexing in the width direction. Instead, the reference simply states that the film 2 is pinched by the drive rollers 80a-80e and the pressing rollers 89a-89e. Thus, the pressing rollers 89a-89e do not correspond to the claimed protrusion portion comprising a cylindrical ridge. Accordingly, claim 8 is allowable for this reason as well.

Also, for claim 10 Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. do not disclose that the retainer member is secured to one of the diffuser plate or the carrier base member and the mask member, for retention by magnetic attraction of one portion of a remaining one of the diffuser plate or the carrier base member and the mask member. The Hashizume et al. reference does not disclose the use of magnetic attraction for retention of a retainer member, or for any other purpose. Rather, the reference is silent regarding the use of magnetic attraction. Moreover, the

Examiner has not pointed to any portion of the reference as allegedly disclosing this feature of claim 10. Hence, claim 10 is not anticipated by Hashizume et al. for this reason.

Furthermore, claim 12 is allowable over the prior art for the additional reason that claim 12 depends from claim 10.

With further regard to claims 16 and 17, Applicants submit that Hashizume et al. fail to teach or suggest all of the limitations of these claims. In particular, the reference does not disclose that the mask member is a selected one of at least first and second mask members associated with respectively the first and second types of photo film, as required by claim 16. The Examiner points to the disclosure of the reference of using different types of film, but such a disclosure says nothing about the mask member being a selected one of at least first and second mask members associated with the first and second types of photo film, respectively. Furthermore, Hashizume et al. do not disclose that the first and second types of photo film have a mask slit with a length different therebetween, as required by claim 17. After reviewing the excerpt of the reference cited by the Examiner (col. 16, lines 55-57), it appears that the cited excerpt is not even related to the claimed feature of claim 17. Instead, it refers to viewing of the negative mask 31 and the projection 31b. Moreover, no other part of the reference appears to disclose the features of claim 17. Therefore, claims 16 and 17 are allowable over the prior art for these additional reasons.

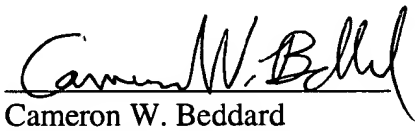
New claims 19-22 are added to provide an alternate scope of coverage for the present invention. Claim 19 incorporates the limitations of claims 1, 2, 4, 6, and 18, except for the "wherein said photo film carrier ..." portion of claim 4 and the "further comprising a diffuser

plate ..." portion of claim 6. Claim 20 includes the limitations of claims 1, 2, and 5. Claim 21 incorporates some of the limitations of claims 1, 2, and 18. Applicants submit that claims 19-22 are allowable for reasons analogous to those presented above.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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